

# Volunteering for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



US Army Corps  
of Engineers



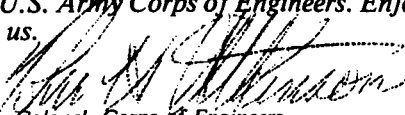
*Welcome to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I really mean that. Your contribution will be significant. You and others who give of their time make the volunteer program successful. Your work will have a lasting effect on Federal lands and waters.*

*The Manager you'll be working for will give you a chance to do things you do well. While this is a work experience, we want it to be a fun experience as well.*

*Ask the Manager and his staff about the things you see them doing. We want you to learn more about us.*

*Regardless of your volunteer position, you will come into contact with visitors. A key to the Corps' management philosophy is viewing these visitors as customers, or "Customer Care." Customer care is truly caring about our project visitors. Our projects are designed, built, and operated to serve them. For this reason, we should show our visitors the same consideration as if they were visiting our homes. In many cases, you may be the only link between the Corps and its customers.*

*Please take a few minutes to review the information in this booklet. I believe you will find it helpful in working as a volunteer and meeting visitors. Again, welcome to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Enjoy your time with us.*



*Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer*

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# Introduction

Many Americans choose to volunteer their time and talents to accomplish public service projects. Until the passage of Public Law (P.L.) 98-63, the Corps was prohibited from accepting the services of volunteers except for special circumstances. P.L. 98-63 authorized the Chief of Engineers to accept the services of volunteers and to provide incidental expenses to carry out any activity of the Army Corps of Engineers except for policy making or law or regulatory enforcement. The Corps' objective is to use voluntary service in a manner which will be mutually beneficial to the volunteer and the public interest.

A Corps volunteer is any person who performs work for the Corps of Engineers for which he or she receives no pay. A volunteer is not considered a Federal employee and is not subject to the provisions of laws relating to Federal employment except for the purpose of tort claims and work-related injuries.

You are one of the many American citizens who have shown their pride in Corps lakes and park areas by becoming a Corps of Engineers Volunteer. Your work for the Corps is a valuable service to the Corps and the visiting public because it is work that would not otherwise be done without your help.

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The jobs for volunteers in the Corps are many. They range from one-day projects to long-term projects which require special skills. The Corps staff will review your interest and skills to try and match you with a job that fits your time requirements.

The recreation resource management program involves all types of work categories, some of which are listed below:

**Clerical  
Campground Host  
Construction  
Interpretation of Natural  
and Cultural History  
Park Maintenance  
Recreation Planning and  
Research**

**Computers  
Fisheries Management  
Historical Preservation  
Resource Protection  
Tour Guide  
Trail Construction  
Visitor Information  
Wildlife Management**

Like any work, after you become familiar with the organization and how it operates, you may be able to move into work areas that require greater skill and responsibility.

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## About the Corps

The Corps of Engineers traces its history in public works construction to our country's earliest days, when the only engineers were those in the U.S. Army. It was they who were asked to lead many of the early explorations and apply their technical knowledge to needed construction projects: road, canal and railroad building and river and harbor improvement. The Corps' role in water resources management began in 1824, when it was directed by Congress to remove snags and sandbars from the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Corps involvement in flood control dates from 1882, when Congress authorized the building of levees along the Mississippi River.

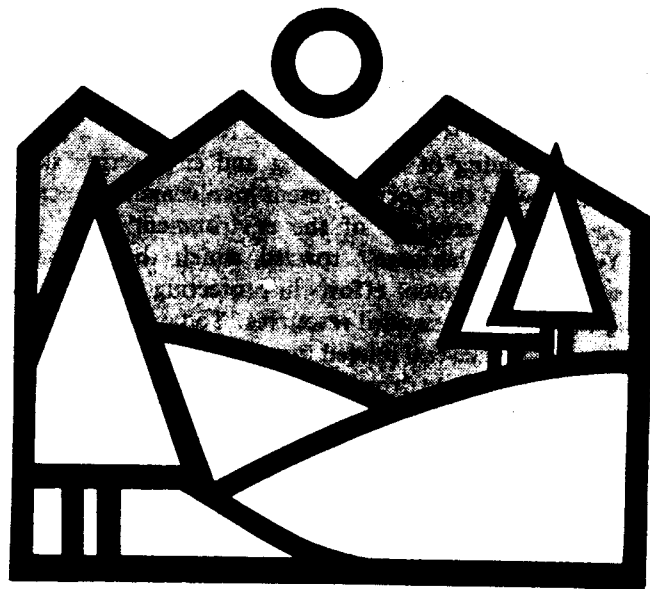
It was not until 1936—just four decades ago—that Congress authorized the Corps to plan and build flood control dams and, in 1938, to operate and maintain them. In 1944, the Corps was authorized to construct and operate public park and recreation facilities in its reservoir areas, and two years later, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act required making provision for the conservation, maintenance and management of wildlife resources and habitat, consistent with the purposes of the reservoirs.

It was not a completely new role for the Corps. The early Army Engineers were not only explorers and nation builders, they were also pioneers in conservation. Military officers joined with concerned citizens to preserve the pristine wonders of the areas that later became Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Sequoia National Parks from some of the early developers—the railroad and timber interests. Engineer officers exploring the Yellowstone River basin noted the unique natural setting and became determined to draw the attention of Congress and the Nation to preserving it as a national park. The reports submitted by two Engineer captains became key documents in arousing public interest in the future of that region.

But, as generations of conservationists have discovered, words alone will not protect scenic areas. Captain William Ludlow, an Engineer officer assigned to the Department of Dakota, observed some of the first vandals and souvenir hunters at Yellowstone busily defacing delicate formations. "Miracles of art," he wrote, "... can be ruined in five minutes by a vandal armed with an axe, and nearly all of the craters show signs of this hopeless and unrestrained barbarity."

Captain Ludlow then recommended that the Army be authorized to patrol the area and build roads for the park's visitors. In the mid-1880's, Congress adopted this plan.

Fortunately, the officers who constructed the system of roadways at the park shared the early explorer's dedication to preserving Yellowstone's natural beauty, as they sought to improve the park without impairing it.



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In response to the Army's early efforts, in 1895, John Muir, the famous naturalist who founded the Sierra Club, wrote:

"For many years they (the Army) have guarded the great Yellowstone Park, and now they are guarding Yosemite. They have found it a desert, as far as underbrush, grass and flowers are concerned, but in two years, the skin of the mountain is healthy again. Blessings on Uncle Sam's soldiers, as they have done the job well, and every pine tree is waving its arms for joy."

This blending of landscaping and engineering skills foreshadowed the Corps' present involvement in recreation and preservation of the environment. It is this "Yellowstone heritage" toward which the Corps is dedicating its present efforts in protecting and enhancing our Nation's natural resources. Today's civil works projects serve several related functions such as flood control, navigation, hydropower, water supply, recreation, and fish and wildlife enhancement.

These flood control structures prevented nearly \$16 billion in flood damages in fiscal year 1975 alone, as well as an inestimable amount of human suffering.

At 65 of these dams, turbines harness natural energy to produce one-fourth of all the hydroelectric power produced in this country.

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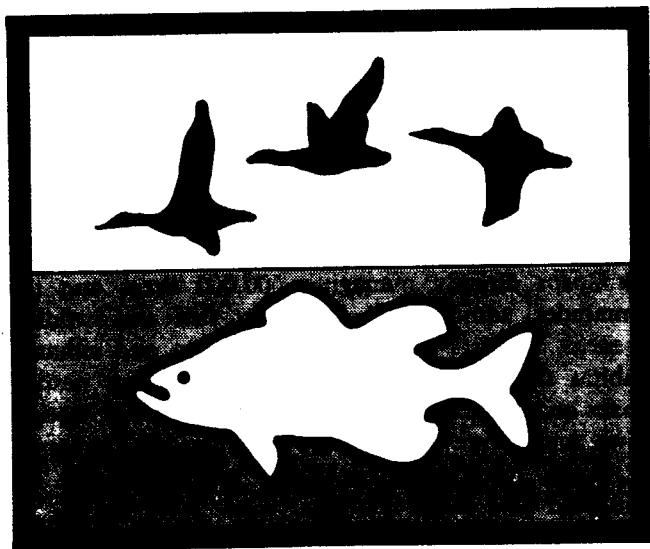
The Corps of Engineers maintains 25,000 miles of inland waterways, which carry over 10 percent of the Nation's inter-city freight and form an important link in the national transportation system.

In administering the land and water areas as its lakes, the Corps operates a professional natural resources management program.

The land has been classified according to the type of management applied, such as natural areas, fish and wildlife areas, forest lands, and recreation lands. Professionals from a number of disciplines, including engineering, forestry, wildlife management, archeology, economics, and biology, work together to achieve sound ecological management.

Conservation of wildlife is also given important consideration. Over two and one-half million acres are devoted to wildlife management at Corps lakes, with the Corps directly managing 600,000 acres and the remainder administered by State fish and wildlife agencies. Efforts are made to maintain and enhance habitat through such measures as installing nesting boxes and planting wildlife food plots, trees, hedgerows, and cover. Corps lands, with their large expanses of water, have provided critical habitat for the endangered bald eagle.

Good fish management is of particular importance, both in maintaining a good ecological balance in the aquatic ecosystem and in insuring a good harvest for commercial or sport fisheries. Fish population are protected and enhanced by carefully designing the dams and appurtenant structures to allow passage of migrating fish and by stocking the lakes and rivers with fish from hatcheries built as part of many of the projects.



Forests on Corps projects are managed in accordance with accepted conservation practices to increase the value of the lands for recreation and wildlife and to promote natural ecological conditions. On forest lands, removal of vegetation, living or dead, is done only with sound justification. Areas containing forests of significant geological or scientific value are protected.

Soil conservation practices employed on Corps property include fertilizing, reseeding, and mulching eroded sites in recreation areas; planting seedlings and other ground cover; stabilizing channel banks; and reclaiming areas where earth was removed or disturbed. These practices prevent erosion, improve watershed capabilities, and extend the life of the lake by slowing sedimentation.

Trained rangers oversee the daily resource management tasks and protect and inform the visiting public.

This concern with the natural resource base enhances the attractiveness of Corps lakes as areas for outdoor recreation. The 436 projects record nearly 400 million recreation days annually—people who come for boating, fishing, swimming, waterskiing, picnicking, camping, nature study, snowmobiling, and hunting. The 3,000 recreation areas include picnic areas, campgrounds, group use areas, boat launching facilities, playgrounds and open play fields, amphitheaters, visitor centers, overlooks, marinas, and hiking and nature trails. Two-thirds of

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the areas are managed by the Corps; the rest are leased to the State, local and other Federal agencies, public service organizations, and concessionaires.

The role of the Corps is more comprehensive and more complex than ever before, but the long-term benefits are considered well worth the effort. The Corps is using its capabilities and its "Yellowstone heritage" to resolve the quality of life issues—not only for today, but for the future.

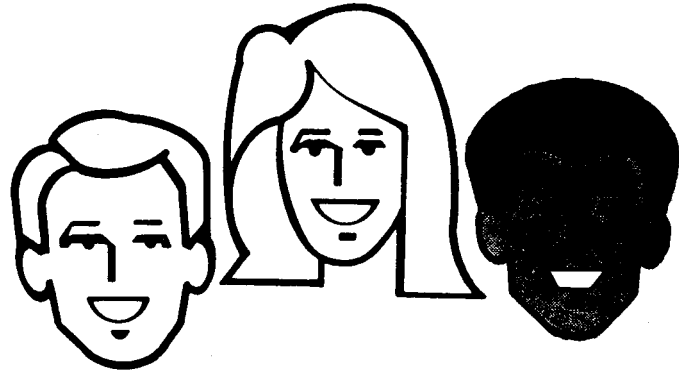
The Corps of Engineers is dedicated to serving the public through the careful development and management of our water and related resources. Perhaps this brief background on the Corps Civil Works activities will help you to better understand how the Corps became involved in lake management and how they go about meeting this challenge.

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## Volunteer Enrollment

A volunteer's tour of duty is negotiated between the volunteer and the Corps supervisor. The tour of duty (hours per day and per week) will depend on the volunteer's availability and work priorities.

A volunteer enrolls by signing a negotiated agreement with a Corps supervisor. The agreement will contain a brief description of the work to be accomplished. A volunteer may not begin work or travel on his or her assignment until the agreement is signed.





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## Volunteer Qualifications

The Corps supervisor negotiating and approving volunteer agreements will determine the necessary qualifications for each volunteer assignment. A volunteer's assigned duties are briefly stated in the agreement. A volunteer may assist in any Corps program or activity, but shall not be permitted to perform law enforcement activities or serve as a collection officer. A volunteer's health and physical condition must be good enough to permit volunteered activities without undue hazard to anyone. A medical examination may be required at Corps expense. A volunteer under the age of 18 must have the written consent of his or her parent or guardian to enroll.

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## Timekeeping

It is very important to keep a record of the number of hours worked and the quantity of work accomplished. This responsibility may be assigned to the leader of a group of volunteers or to each individual volunteer.

For group projects, members who are participating in the project should be listed on a sheet with the name of the project and this list is given to the Corps supervisor to use for work-related injuries or tort claims. This list should be attached to the group agreement form.

# Supervision and Work Performance

The volunteer's responsibility is to perform the work as described and agreed to in the volunteer's agreement. The Corps responsibility is to provide adequate supervision and to recommend termination of a volunteer if his or her service is unsatisfactory.

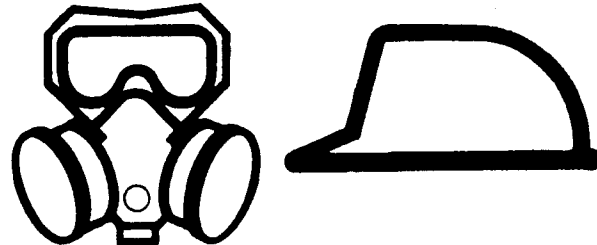


# Safety

The Corps is very concerned about the safety of volunteers. Safety is part of each work day; no job is so urgent or important that it cannot be done safely. Safety equipment such as seat belts, hard hats, goggles, and so forth, are available and must be used.

You will be instructed in the safe operation of hand and power tools before using them.

All volunteers, at some time during their service, are issued tools, equipment, or other Government property needed to perform their jobs. It is your responsibility to return all items assigned to you or to report all losses and damaged property to your supervisor. If, through your negligence, you lose or damage equipment, you may be required to pay for the loss or damage.

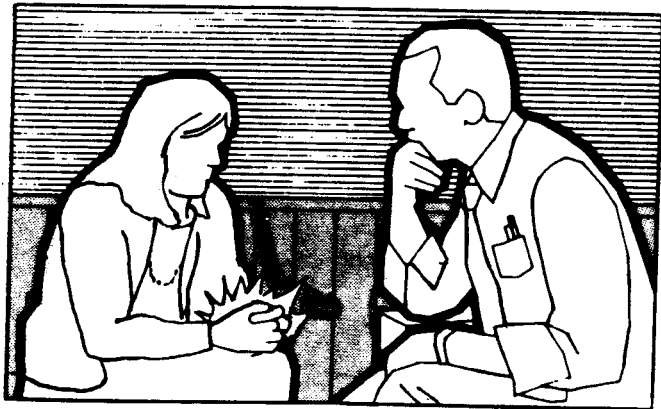


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## Injuries

If you are injured on the job, you must report the injury to your supervisor immediately, regardless of how insignificant the injury may be. This is to protect you if complications develop later from the injury. If you are allergic to bee stings or other insect stings, you must inform your supervisor.

As a volunteer, you are not covered by a hospital plan or Federal life insurance. However, if you are injured on the job, you may be eligible for Office of Workers's Compensation Program (OWCP) benefits.



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## Expiration of Voluntary Service

Length of volunteer service must be agreed on by the prospective volunteer and the Corps before finalizing a work agreement. If, for whatever reason, premature cancellation of an agreement is necessary, this can be done by notifying the other party.

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# Volunteer Code of Conduct

1. **Personal Appearance.** Because the Corps of Engineers has a responsibility to gain public acceptance and support for their programs, the volunteer is expected to maintain a personal appearance that reflects well on the Corps.

2. **Consumption of intoxicating beverages on Government-owned property, transportation of such beverages in Government-owned or Government-leased vehicles, or use of such beverages at any time or place while performing work for the Corps is prohibited.**

3. **Volunteers may not have in their possession or use any form of drugs, unless prescribed by a physician.**

4. **Personal use of Government-owned or Government-leased vehicles, property, tools, equipment or telephones is not allowed.**

5. **Volunteers may not fight or use abusive language toward the public, other employees, or their supervisor.**

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# Code of Responsibility for Volunteers

- **Be Convinced.** Do not offer your services unless you believe in the value of what you are doing.
- **Accept the Rules.** There may be a good reason. Find out why the rule exists if you don't understand.
- **Speak Up.** Ask about things you don't understand. Don't coddle your doubts and frustrations if they are bothering you.
- **Be Willing to Learn.** Training is essential to any job well done.
- **Welcome Supervision.** You will do a better job and enjoy it more if you are doing what is expected of you.
- **Be Dependable.** Your word is your bond. Don't make promises you can't keep.
- **Be a Team Player.** Find a place for yourself on the team. The lone operator is pretty much out of place in today's complex community.

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## Bill of Rights for Volunteers

- The right to be treated as a coworker, not just free help.
- The right to a suitable assignment, with consideration for personal preference, life experience, education, and employment background.
- The right to know as much about the agency as possible: its policies, its people, its programs.
- The right to training for the job, thoughtfully planned and effectively presented.
- The right to supervision and direction by someone who is experienced, and well-informed.
- The right to a variety of experiences and advancement to assignments of more responsibility.

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## Meeting the Visitor

The Corps of Engineers is charged with serving the American people. More people than ever before depend on Corps lakes for recreation and other uses. The general public is becoming increasingly interested in how our lakes are being managed. To serve our visitors, we need to be more sensitive and responsive to their needs and wants. This could, in turn, increase their cooperation and support for good land management and associated activities.

There is no trick to being responsive. It simply calls for good manners, a genuine interest in those being served, and an informed and helpful attitude.

Our Corps theme of customer care is communicated both directly and indirectly. It shows itself in ways that may not be obvious to the new volunteer or employee. The following questions help to define customer care:

- How available are Corps personnel to the public?
- Can someone be reached in our offices and information obtained most of the time?
- Is the person on duty able to provide visitor information?
- Are our offices open at times convenient to the public?

- Are the visitors subject to red tape procedures to obtain permits or other assistance?
- Do people feel safe and relatively protected by the presence of staff personnel?
- Is there a way for visitors to indicate their desires or responses to existing services?

The answers to these questions convey to the public the Corps attitude of customer care. You, the volunteer, play a key role in conveying this attitude to the visiting public.



## Guidelines for Communication

The impression people receive from Corps volunteers and employees form the image they have of our organization. As part of the Corps family, you should do your best to make this image as positive as possible. You will be the Corps to the public you meet—so be prepared. We are confident you will do a good job and represent the Corps well. Here are some guidelines that may help you communicate with the visiting public.

### Handling an Embarrassing Situation

Do—

1. Be understanding
2. Be sympathetic and kind
3. Take positive action to ease and resolve the problem
4. Draw attention away from the mishap or problem
5. Be calm

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## **Explaining a Corps of Engineers Rule or Regulation**

**Do—**

1. Be friendly and polite
2. Explain carefully and accurately the rule or regulation
3. Keep the conversation on a positive note

**Don't—**

1. Apologize for the rule
2. Scold or “chew out” the customer
3. Be abrupt, hurried, impatient

## **Multiple Request Situations**

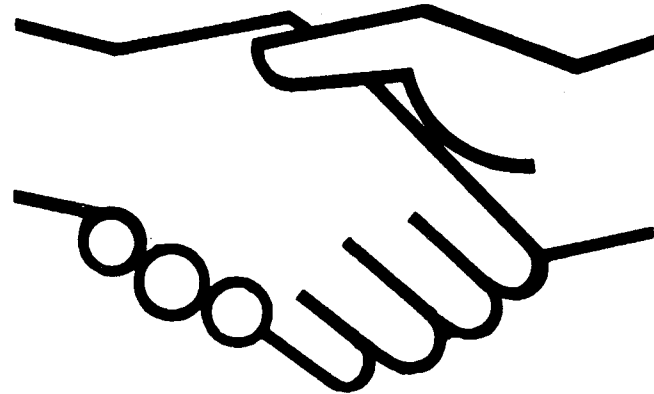
When faced with a situation where a number of people are making requests of you,

1. Keep cool
2. Give information in turn as rapidly as possible
3. Finish with the customer you are in the process of serving before a lengthy involvement with the next in line
4. Let people know you are aware that they are waiting for service

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## **Helping the Visitor**

1. Take each opportunity to help our visitors
2. Remember you represent the Corps and its services
3. Take pride in doing a good job of serving the public



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# Customer Care

The Corps theme of customer care consists of many elements: product quality, leadership, pride in our work, concern for our visitors, and many other subtle elements of visitor contact. Positive visitor contact is a very important aspect of customer care. Below are listed four basic principles of positive visitor contacts. If these principles are followed, we are confident that our visitors will see the Corps takes its theme of customer care seriously.

1. Be receptive
2. Be helpful
3. Be accurate
4. Be informed

What happens when we brush off a visitor because we're too busy with our own problems, or go roaring past a frantically waving camper . . . or give information that's inaccurate . . . or shout or sigh impatiently because our work is being interrupted? . . . The Corps has made a permanent enemy.

But, it doesn't need to happen, and won't, when the basic principles listed above are followed.

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Does your attitude fit in with these fundamentals? Do you feel that visitors are the most important people you'll meet while working for the Corps?

Let's put these principles in a little different perspective.

## 1. Be Receptive.

If you see that a visitor wants to talk to you, take time to speak with him.

Be friendly; a smile helps to say that you are.

Offer to help if your visitor seems hesitant to ask.

Above all, don't be a grouch if your other work is interrupted.

Give the visitor your full attention. Your level of interest shows in your attitude.

Most visitors are easy to be nice to. They want a good experience, and we're supposed to see that it is.

## 2. Be Helpful.

Take time to make sure the visitor understands what you're saying.

If necessary, write out directions or repeat the entire directions if the visitor appears confused.

Saying, "I don't know" is acceptable, but don't leave it at that! Help the visitor find out where to get an answer. "That's not my department" just doesn't make it as an



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answer. If you can't help the visitor, make sure you help them to find the person who can.

Show visitors that you're really concerned with helping them. Think how you'd like to be treated in the same situation.



## Notes